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THE CENTRAL IOWA EXPERIENCE

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ON THE COVER: Julia Slocum in
a field of her organic vegetables.

EDITOR'S NOTE



Men and women are in full swing of farming this summer. Before you know it there will be dust signals of harvest in the evening air. Harvest time is my favorite part of summer while traveling back and forth through Iowa and South Dakota.

I have spent a few days this summer on my grandparent's farm in Inwood, Iowa, but those few days will never be enough. Growing up, I could hardly wait for my scheduled week of summer vacation to explore the farm and hangout with grandma and grandpa. It was a magical place for us grandkids. We all grew up in good sized towns so the farm was a welcoming natural adventure. Through the eyes of my childhood self I saw my grandma usually staying at the house with us while grandpa was in the field. I am sure it was mostly because the grandchildren were not allowed to get too close to running machinery. So, instead we helped her make applesauce, picked fruits and vegetables from the garden, played in her thousands of quilting scrap bins, went to the cellar to pick out our jars of pickles and tired out the multitudes of farm cats by trying with all our being to catch one.

But grandma's job description includes much more than house and yard work. She grew up on a farm and is married to a farmer. Pat Niemeyer is a farmer. She does many of the same things grandpa does, and

they each have their own tasks and chores that make their days different from each other. They each have a better knowledge about certain parts of the farm, such as grandpa is more involved with the machinery and fields, while grandma oversees the house.

Before grandpa retired he was a semi truck driver. That job required him to be on the road for days at a time. While grandpa was out on the road, grandma raised three boys, thousands of head of cattle, rabbits, hogs, chickens and crops. She was Momma to the whole farm.

Grandma also has a quilting hobby, so she has a vast sewing knowledge to go with it. I can say with almost certainty that this hobby turned into a chore at times. She lived with four other farmers in rural Iowa...clothing was made, repaired and re-purposed.

So many fun childhood memories are flooding back as I make an effort to describe this female farmer. Those magical fluffy childhood memories don't begin to describe what this woman means to her farm. She has given blood, sweat and tears of all emotion to help bring her farm to where it is today. This 5'2" Dutch-Irish woman makes the best Christmas dessert and has the power and know-how to hold authority over a stubborn, unyielding bull without hesitation. My grandma is a superhero who happens to be an amazing farmer.

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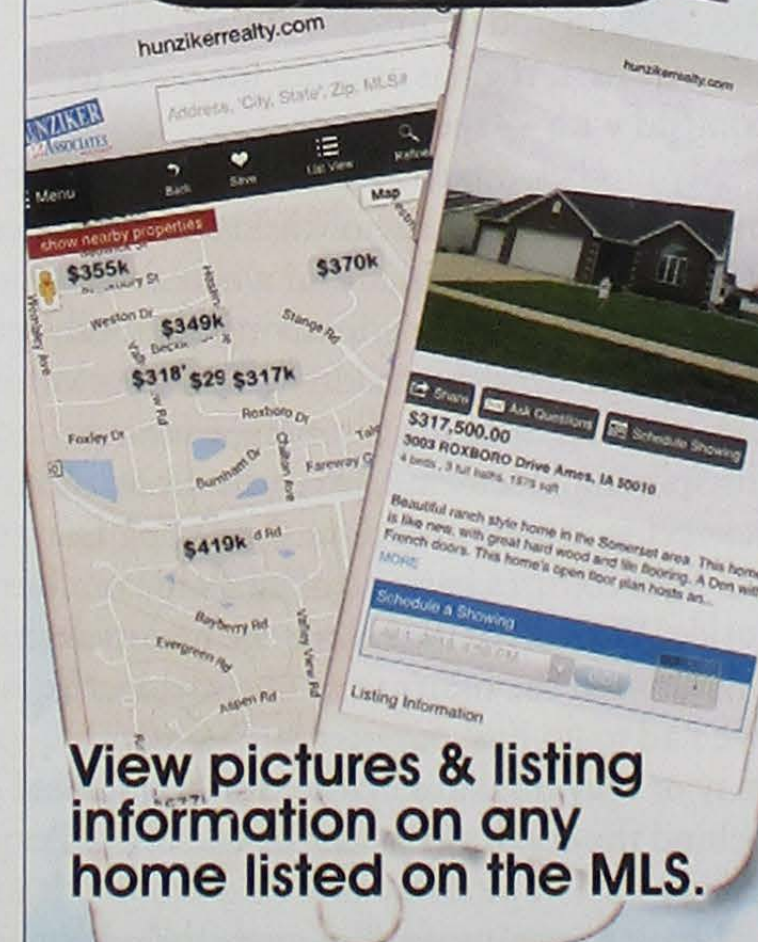
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THE FARM WIFE:

I signed up for this?

BY KAREN SCHWALLER
Contributing writer

Oh, how we dreamed about what life would be like as a grown-up. To do what we wanted, when we wanted. To eat what we wanted, when we wanted. To boldly go where no man had gone before ... oh, wait. That's "Star Trek."

For today's farm wife, none of those things actually happen (except for the '... going where no man has gone before' part.) Our lives are not typical of the average woman's life today. Besides putting everyone else first, she has another life piece to contend with — the farm.

My mother, a farmer's wife for 54 years, maintained that the farm was dad's mistress. It took most of his time, and whenever it beckoned, he responded, leaving my mother home with all of the children, laundry, cleaning, cooking, mending, ironing, canning, disciplining, doctoring, psychoanalysis and refereeing. There were days she swung from the light fixtures because of it, if only on the inside. With all of that work she had to do, I'm amazed she didn't raise any sociopaths. We had to go find our own fun — which may or may not have involved sneaking out behind the corn crib to smoke one of Dad's cigars.

I have to say my mother made the whole thing look fairly easy, or I would never have freely signed up for it nearly 30 years ago.

It's purely a case of false advertising, making me wonder if the license I signed at the church should be legally binding.

Farm people learn to bike and drive on gravel roads, and bale hay in 90-degree weather. There is no anti-perspirant known to man that will keep an underarm dry on baling day, especially if you're stacking in the barn. And grilling supper at 10:30 p.m. afterwards. Ugh.

After power washing the farrowing house, it occurred to me once that I should stop perming my hair. After all, the only ones outside of my family who saw me at the time were the hogs. I doubted they cared what my hair looked like — even splattered with water and manure.

Farm wives have a unique look. We intentionally wear insulated coveralls and those fashionable rubber boots. Vogue Magazine editors would be covering their mouths and whispering behind our backs at the shape it gives us, but I've never seen a farm yet where high fashion and charm got the job done.

Vacations are few and far between, and day trips take us past every implement dealer along the route. Date night may involve stopping to feed livestock or check crops on your way to wherever you're going. I'm sure an outing involving a plane would include some kind of crop dusting scenario. Evening plans and restful nights are sometimes interrupted by animals on the run. Still, they find it easier to have animals on the run, than

animals with the runs.

And the language she has heard on hog loading day; Howard Stern has nothing on busy, angry or impatient farmers.

Supper is always served after dark. Rarely an exception.

She can drive a skid loader, tractor or combine, baler, grain cart, field cultivator or sometimes the planter, with only a few rounds of instructions on the go.

She helps animals have their babies and sympathizes with them; she's had babies, too.

Her washing machine works as hard as she does, the dishes may pile up in the sink if she's busy outside, and the dusting. Let's just say she's always loved bunnies.

But the upswing is that she's contributing to the world's second oldest profession. She juggles it all — a husband, children, family activities, often a job in town, working on the farm, managing the finances, helping make farm decisions and keeping the home fires burning. She makes the house a home, and advocates and prays for her family.

And even though it may not always appear that she has it all, she can drive her dirty pickup truck and full hay rack past people working outside of their beautiful lake homes, feeling just as much pride and accomplishment in her life as they do in theirs.

They both enjoy the views from their windows.

FOR MISBEHAVIOR, LOWER THE BOOM, NOT A FLYSWATTER

BY JOHN ROSEMOND
Tribune News Service

One of the most common of complaints from today's parents is "we've tried everything." They refer, of course, to having tried numerous approaches to various long-standing behavior problems, all with no success. In many cases, the problems in question have worsened, as if they have developed resistance over time to any and all forms of discipline.

When I talk at any length to these parents, however, I almost invariably find they have not tried approaches that are not "psychologically correct," meaning they have limited themselves to imposing minor consequences for short periods of time. An example would be depriving a persistently disrespectful and disobedient child of television for a week. A minority of these beleaguered parents are able to puff themselves up enough to impose a major consequence for a short period of time — as in depriving an alcohol-prone teen of his or her car for one entire two-day weekend. But then a major consequence suffered for only a short period of time is actually a minor consequence.

I describe consequences of the aforementioned sort as "trying to stop a charging elephant with a flyswatter."

They do not work because they amount to nothing more than minor inconveniences to said children, and when a problem is major, minor will not suffice. In fact, minor consequences used repeatedly virtually guarantee that behavior problems will worsen over time.

The parents in question are a paradox in that they complain loudly about said problems but have great difficulty doing what is necessary to stop them. They have great difficulty, in other words, making their children greatly unhappy and keeping them in that state until permanent memories set in mental concrete.

To stop a charging elephant, one must use artillery. Likewise, to stop charging-elephant-size misbehavior and keep it stopped, one must use artillery-size consequences that create permanent memories of a highly negative sort.

So, returning to the examples given above, I would recommend that the persistently disrespectful and disobedient child be deprived of anything that exceeds basic necessity until (a) his delinquency completely disappears and (b) he has managed 30, maybe even 45, straight days of complete respect and obedience. And I would recommend

that the parents of said alcohol-prone teen confiscate the child's car and cell phone with this announcement: "Beloved child of ours who cannot seem to have fun without consuming alcohol, you will get these back when you have been alcohol-free for six months, with the understanding that if there is a relapse during or after the next six months, they will be sold and never replaced by us."

Sixty years ago, before parents began listening to professional parenting experts (such as yours truly), discipline of the above sort was referred to as "lowering the boom." The resulting BOOM! was very corrective.



Slocum relies on roots as standard for organic farm

BY TODD BURRAS | Contributing writer

Julia Slocum didn't take a traditional path to starting her own farming operation.

Of course Slocum, 31, has memories of her brother showing her how to pick carrots out of the dirt in a small garden her mother maintained and rubbing off the dirt and eating the sweet vegetable on the spot. And Slocum's mother did work at Iowa State University in seed science for many years and at various large seed companies. She also loved visiting the dairy farm her aunt and uncle still run in northern Missouri.

Still, when Slocum started dreaming about doing something in the field of agriculture herself, she didn't consider it a real option because she felt like she had to have either grown up on a farm or have studied agriculture formally in order to pursue it as a career.

"It took many years to get over that misconception," Slocum said.

But she did.

After earning a degree in Spanish and International Studies from the University of Iowa in 2005, Slocum went to China for a semester, worked in Washington D.C. at an environmental nonprofit for a year and then spent two years at an international development agency. She then got involved in prairie and woodland restoration around the Midwest for a year while working for the Conservation Corps through Americorp and then spent two seasons working on vegetable farms. In the off-season she worked for Practical Farmers of Iowa and the Iowa Farmers Union. After that, Slocum decided it was time to dip her toes in the waters of small-farm vegetable gardening not only for herself, but for others.

"I started Lacewing Acres with my first garlic planting in fall of 2012," she said. "A farming couple in Boone County had some pasture ground that I used in exchange for a share in my Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). It was a great deal, and I'm so grateful for that opportunity. Land access is a big issue for beginning farmers. I stayed there for 2013 and 2014, and then moved to a new location, closer to Ames for this 2015 season."

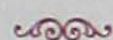
Lacewing Acres is now a 3-acre vegetable farm just north of Ames. It is named after the green lacewing, a native insect of Iowa “that preys on the pests we all hate to find in our salad mix,” Slocum said. The farm is committed to “a way of farming that builds the health and quality of its soil, creates habitat for beneficial insects and provides opportunities for eaters and their families to learn about growing food and land stewardship first-hand.”

To learn more, visit www.lacewingacres.com/the-farm/ or visit the farm’s Facebook page.

Slocum is the sole owner and operator and shares a location on 80 acres of certified organic farmland with Alluvial Brewing Company and Prairie Bloom Farm and is next to Prairie Moon Winery and Vineyards. This season she hired her first “official” part-time employee, and she also has a few others who work a few hours a week for her in exchange for produce.

While Slocum has come a long way in her appreciation for eating and involvement in growing vegetables from the days of her youth, the memory of standing in the garden munching on a fresh carrot isn’t far from her mind.

“That carrot is my gold standard of carrot flavor,” she said.



■ Can you give us a short overview of what you raise on your farm, including who all is involved, what you grow and raise and what you do with your products?

We’re up to 3 acres of over 30 different crops, well over 100 different varieties and are certified organic. We are primarily a CSA farm with just under 50 shares but over 60 households participate. We also sell at the

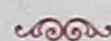
Ames Main Street Farmers’ Market and some sales to local businesses like Café Diem, Green Hills Retirement Center and Wheatsfield Co-op.



■ What are your roles and responsibilities with your farm and how to do those roles and responsibilities change throughout the seasons from spring through winter?

Much like how many people believe teachers get the whole summer off, many also believe vegetable farmers get the winter off. That’s largely untrue. Things definitely slow down, but the work does not end when the field is cleaned up, which can take into mid-November or later, depending on the season, and many do some sort of season extension that takes growing into the winter months and starts up early in the spring while snow is still on the ground.

I haven’t made those investments yet, but I can stay pretty busy through December just going through records from the season, working on seed and supply orders, researching upcoming major purchases, going through CSA membership surveys and generally planning for the next year. Winter is also the time for many conferences and lots of reading/research on how to do things better.



■ What are the biggest challenges to a start-up farm like yours and then how do they change as the farm gains traction and grows?

Land with water and electric access, capital, building up assets and assembling needed and helpful tools and equipment. If you’re landless and asset-less, you have to buy

or find everything you need. This leads to a level of decision fatigue I’d never experienced before — so many choices in tools, seed, cropping systems ... just everything. When you start your own business, especially starting one solo, there is no one else to make any of the decisions. That is one of the hardest parts.

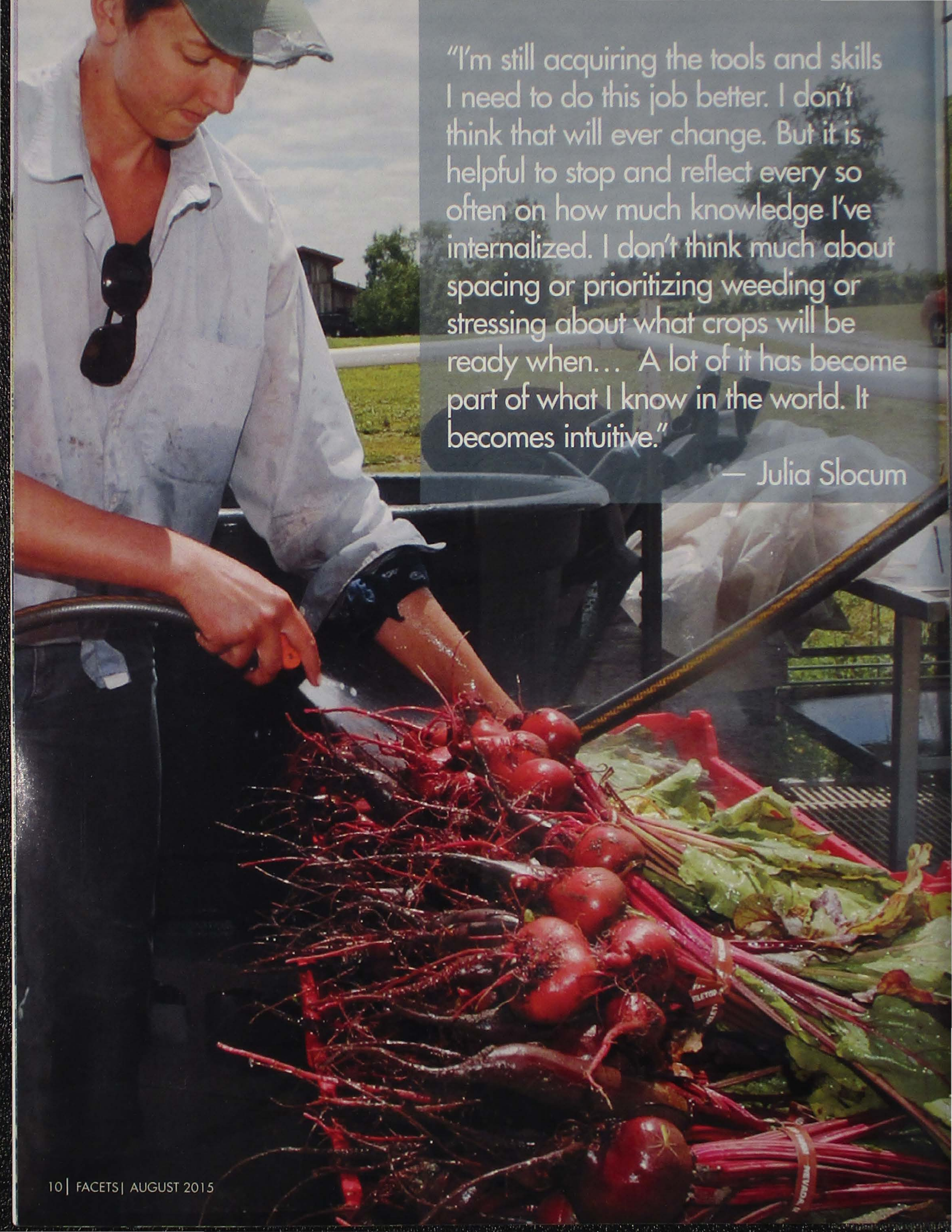
Established farms also always seem to have stashes of all sorts of useful items tucked in corners and piles, but when you’re starting out, everything you need you have to buy or find elsewhere and haul it to wherever you need it. That was one of the most frustrating, and surprisingly so, parts of starting the farm.

Another challenge is that I got into this to farm, but there’s way more than just growing vegetables. A small vegetable farm also means construction, working with machinery, electric fencing, refrigeration, learning about insects, soil, weeds, weather ... it’s getting to know your particular ground. It’s also about becoming a whiz with spreadsheets, using accounting programs, business planning, balance sheets, budgeting and marketing, a new level of complication to doing your taxes. Having employees adds yet another layer with filing taxes and managing people.

A very imminent challenge, though, is this awkward phase of getting a business off the ground. It is somewhat easy to make a profit, however small, at the beginning, when expenses are relatively low. But as I grow, there is this gap where I need to invest — in tools, field, greenhouse and packing supplies, machinery, coolers — capital investments beyond the regular operating expenses. It also gets to a point where I need more help, which means paid workers, but that doesn’t necessarily coincide with a guaranteed increase in income.

LACEWING, page 11





"I'm still acquiring the tools and skills I need to do this job better. I don't think that will ever change. But it is helpful to stop and reflect every so often on how much knowledge I've internalized. I don't think much about spacing or prioritizing weeding or stressing about what crops will be ready when... A lot of it has become part of what I know in the world. It becomes intuitive."

— Julia Slocum



LACEWING continued from page 9

■ Are small farms sustainable for the long haul or is this just a temporary renaissance of small farms the country is going through?

Yeah, this is also a common and big question. I don't know the answer. I am starting year 3. I have a few, not many, but a few examples of small-ish farms that are actually making their full-time, year-round living as vegetable farmers. I look to them as models for how to make this work.

Lately though, I have also thought about how, as a society, we have decided there are many jobs we deem essential despite the fact that they don't generate a profit. Teachers, for example, or nurses, pastors, counselors. There are many service-oriented jobs, and sometimes I wonder if at some point, farming may become something like those. I wonder what it would be like to earn a salary so that I could devote my time to just growing food for people. I fantasize sometimes about what it would be like to not stress so much about how I'm going to make a living at this, so I could devote that energy thinking more creatively about this work.

CSA is sort of this idea — a group of people who come together to provide financial backing to a grower who grows their food — but requires a certain scale of production before making a living is possible. I hope to get there as soon as I can.

■ Why does it seem like more women are getting more directly involved in the day-to-day operations of farming than in previous generations?

In a lot of ways, the idea that women are only now coming into agriculture is a myth.

Women have always been involved, maybe not always acknowledged publicly as decision-makers, but women farmers is not a new thing. The rise in women-owned and -operated farms like mine is not at all surprising. The more we relax and let go of our traditional roles and gendered assumptions about interests and abilities, the sooner we'll see way more people discovering work they are passionate about and excel at — not just women, but everyone. I want to see more people pursuing work they didn't think they were capable of doing, and I want to live in a community where people feel totally free and encouraged to do so.

Probably the greatest thing farming has brought to my life is how it made me realize my strength by forcing me to use it, and how it has made me love things that once intimidated me. This work has simultaneously developed in me a sense of self-reliance I've never felt before, and has been teaching me the importance of calling for back up and accepting help. Maybe that's just part of growing up and I would have discovered it in any job, but I doubt it.

■ What short-term and long-term goals do you have for your farm?

My short-term goal is to have a good season, keep my CSA members happy and grow interest in the CSA model so I can fill as many shares as possible next year. This season I want to learn more about conservation tillage in vegetable production. I want to become the best steward of the soil I can be.

My long-term goal is to learn how to create more space in my life for other people and interests, and make a real living.

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Remembering America's 'Mulch Queen'

BY JAN RIGGENBACH
Contributing writer

Do an Internet search for “mulch queen” and Ruth Stout’s name pops up. She literally changed the way we garden.

It’s been decades since I viewed a film about Stout’s no-work garden-ing techniques, but the memory of one scene is still vivid.

By the time the film was made, Stout was an old and much revered lady. In the film, she’s shown tossing seed potatoes on the ground, throwing an armload of spoiled hay on top, and declaring, “There, the potatoes are planted.”

I still have a copy of Stout’s “How to Have a Green Thumb Without an Aching Back,” a paperback reprinted in 1973 and sold for the grand sum of \$1.95.

Stout’s method began with her impatience waiting for the plowman to show up to prepare her vegetable garden for spring planting. Deciding

she wasn’t going to wait any longer, she scratched aside accumulated debris on the garden’s surface and planted her seeds. Neighbors laughed and ridiculed her, but she kept on perfecting her method, discovering that a thick layer of hay atop the soil year-round let her skip tilling, digging, harrowing, weeding, and watering.

Revolutionary as the idea of a permanent mulch was at the time, the results spoke for themselves and word spread.

Today it is a rare vegetable garden that is not mulched.

For city gardeners, though, hay is no longer as easy to come by as it was in Stout’s day. Grass clippings make a wonderful substitute, provided that they come from lawns not treated with herbicides, of course. I still see dire warnings not to use fresh clippings, lest they burn the plants. But that just doesn’t happen. A 1-inch layer of green clippings spread between plants does a marvelous job of keeping weeds

from sprouting. If the clippings are already dried, it takes a much deeper layer to stop weeds, in my experience.

Of course, grass clippings, too, are always in short supply these days. Lawns are shrinking. And many of us use mulching mowers, which helps the lawn by returning nutrients to the soil but produces no clippings for mulching the vegetable garden.

While long-lasting mulches like wood chips and shredded bark are desirable around trees, shrubs, and perennials where the soil is not disturbed, they’re not ideal in a vegetable garden. Shredded leaves, though, are perfect. You can pile them on the garden in autumn and leave them to protect the soil all winter. In spring, the leaves are easily scratched aside in the spots where you want to plant.

When mulch is in short supply, you can spread a page or two of newspaper beneath whatever leaves, hay or grass clippings you have to help hold in moisture and keep out weeds.

Sweet corn and other vegetables prosper when grown using the permanent mulching system first advocated by Ruth Stout. *Photo by Jan Rigenbach*

Maximize the potential of your vacation pictures

BY MYSCHA THERIAULT
Tribune News Service

From the Machu Picchu money shot taken in Peru's Sacred Valley to an image of Florence's Ponte Vecchio in perfect afternoon light, nothing keeps the memories of your journey alive like a framed photo or the ultimate smartphone selfie. Not only are tourist snapshots some of the most inexpensive souvenirs an excursionist can bring home, they can also help you earn a little cash on the side. Interested in making money from your vacation pictures? These tips from professional travel photographers will give you some inside knowledge.

AUDIENCE:
Everything-everywhere.

com's Gary Arndt has been posting his travel photography online for nearly a decade, gaining both national and international attention for his efforts. His method for earning that elusive six-figure income might surprise you, however. According to Arndt, his secret lies with not worrying about selling his images and focusing instead on selling to the extensive audience he has developed with those images over the years. An audience that exists for both his blog and his social media platforms, including Instagram.

His recommended products? Things like online training courses, electronic books and gear items from companies he trusts. Arndt also leads paid photo

tours through partnerships with adventure companies. While other photography professionals have found success with online image sales, that isn't where the bulk of his revenue comes from. "Online photo sales for me are really only about \$200 to \$300 per year," says Arndt.

CONCEPT: According to Karen Foley, a photographer who earns a living from the stock image site Dreamstime, paying attention to certain types of

photo opportunities can pay off big time when it comes to image sales. "Iconic images associated with popular travel destinations have been done to death," says Foley. The photographer adds, "It's better to look off the beaten path. Destinations that are by definition difficult to reach will not already be completely covered." Foley also advises searching out photo opportunities of people enjoying destinations which fit into current travel trends, such as family-friendly destinations, the 50-plus retiree or adventure travel.

Minnesota photographer Amy Zellmer prefers to keep things a little more personal by

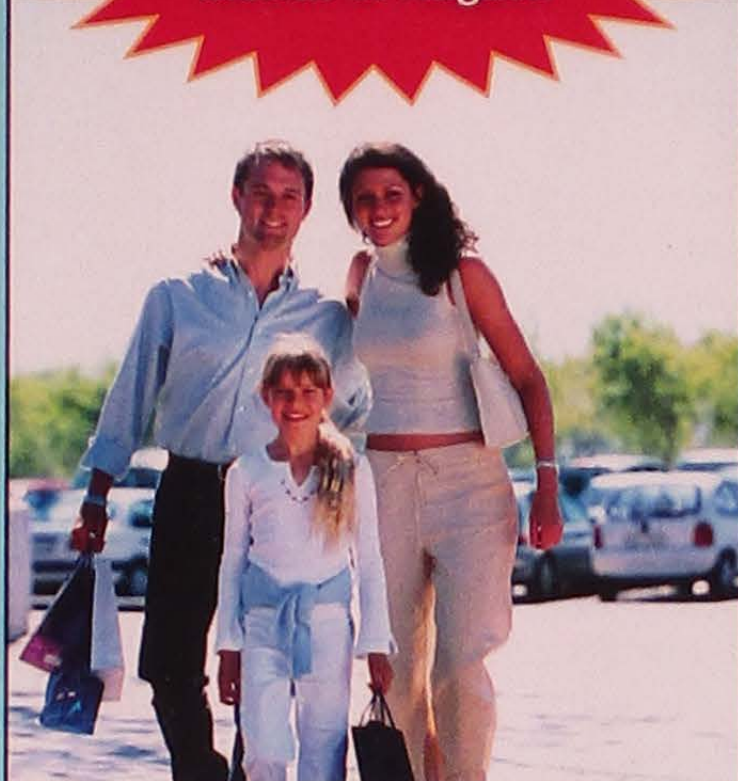
focusing on the needs and wants of her customer base. For example, when she prints out larger images to sell at the Saint Paul Art Crawl, she also makes sure to print smaller, more affordable items as well. Things such as small framed prints, magnets and even greeting cards help provide a price range that meets the needs of all. Zellmer also sells her images on Etsy, where she incorporates key words into the descriptions that match what people are already searching for. When asked what people tend to purchase, the art pro states that is also a personal decision for her customers. "If something resonates with them such as a palm tree or a type of flower, they will purchase it," says Zellmer.



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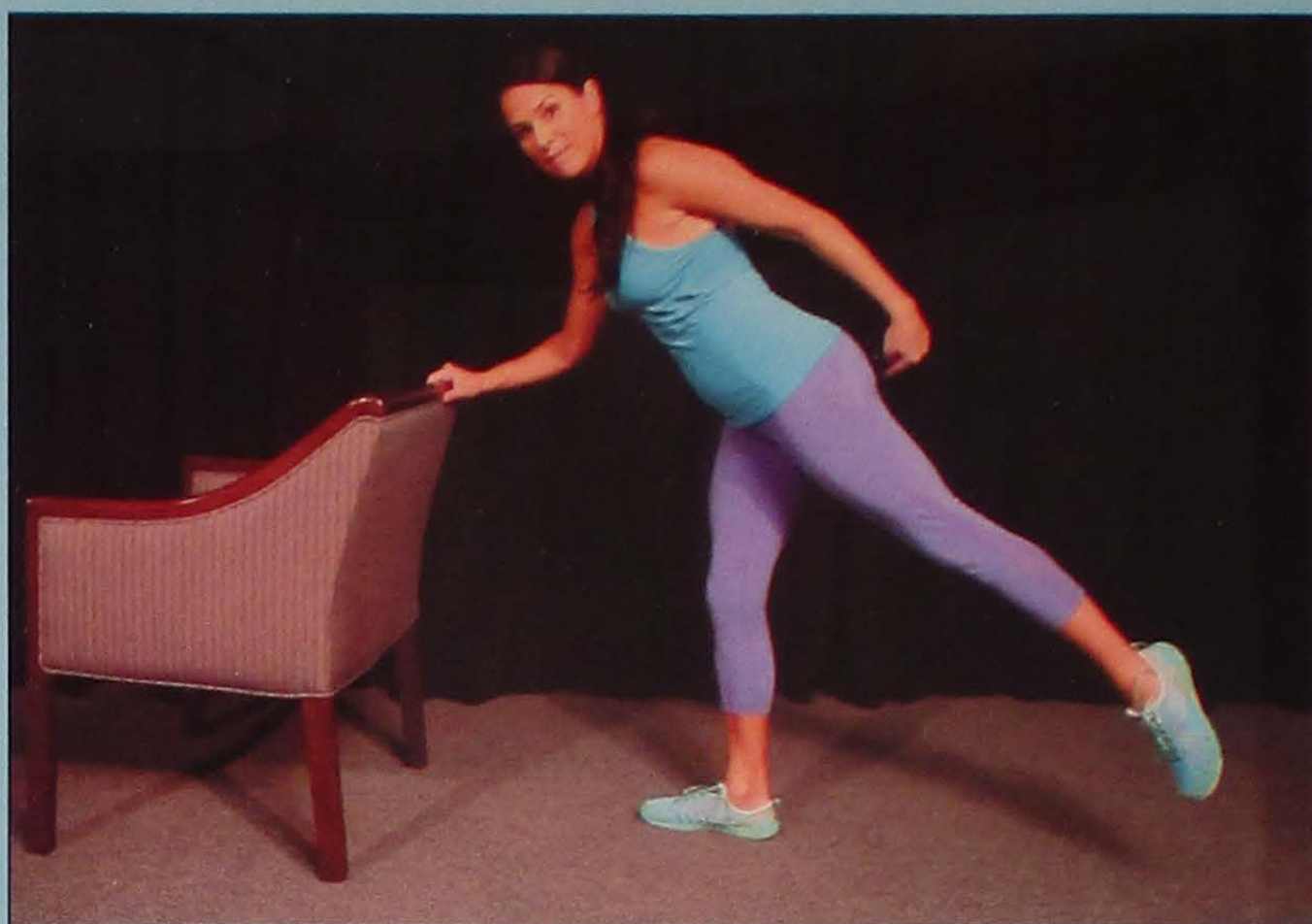
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FITNESS



This move is called the "fold over"; and it will help you build lean muscle by lifting the glutes and defining the hamstrings. Photo by Cheryl A. Guerrero/ Los Angeles Times/TNS

Raising the barre for tight glutes

BY RENE LYNCH
Los Angeles Times

So simple. Yet so hard. That's the best way to describe this dance-inspired move from Suzanne Bowen, creator of BarreAmped. It looks easy and yet ... well, try it for yourself and you'll see.

WHAT IT DOES:

This move is called the fold-over, and it will help you build lean muscle by lifting the glutes and defining the hamstrings. It's for anyone who wants a Kim Kardashian booty with curves in all the right places.

WHAT TO DO:

Bowen recommends warming up for five minutes or so, with either a brisk walk or light jog.

Start by standing 2 or so feet away from a kitchen counter or a chair that won't slide away when you put some pressure on it. Grab ahold of the counter or chair, engage the core, and tilt your upper body forward as you raise your left leg behind you. Height,

however, is not the point. Raise it only as far as you can without losing your form: Fight to keep hips squared to the front, and then pulse the raised leg until it burns. Repeat on the other side, remembering to keep your body, from head to heel, poised in one long line.

When you're ready, work up to these two advanced options: Stand a few extra inches back from the counter or chair, so you have room to tilt the upper body forward even more while raising your left leg behind you. You're not trying to get parallel to the floor, you're just aiming for the spot that allows you to put all your attention on the working muscles. Ready for even more? Raise up on the ball of your standing foot, so you engage your calf as you tilt and pulse the opposite foot.

HOW MUCH

Perform this exercise two to three times a week, working up to two minutes on either side. Remember to take a day of rest in between workouts.

Taking a look at longevity annuities in retirement

BY JANET KIDD STEWART
Chicago Tribune

Longevity insurance has worked its way into retirement plans. Does it belong in yours?

MetLife recently launched a qualifying longevity annuity contract, or QLAC, for employer 401(k)s, and a few firms offer individual policies for IRAs.

The contracts are deferred income annuities, tailored for retirement accounts and designed to provide a stream of income later in life. Federal guidelines issued last year changed the way required minimum distributions are calculated when traditional IRA and 401(k) account owners reach 70, paving the way for the products.

Money in a QLAC is removed from the required minimum distribution calculation until the owner turns on the annuity payments, no later than age 85. Owners can contribute up to 25 percent of their retirement accounts, or \$125,000, whichever is lower.

They could have obvious appeal for people whose savings are predominantly in their retirement accounts and who don't have funds in a taxable account to purchase an annuity. They could also attract people trying to lower their required distributions for tax purposes, though those retirees might be wealthy enough not to need the insurance.

Deferred income annuities in general provide an insured floor of income not dependent on stock market returns. With them, retirees who overspend from their stock and bond portfolios or suffer weak markets would have some minimum monthly benefit in addition to Social Security as they move into old age.

Another target could be couples planning to replace the first deceased spouse's Social Security income, or they

could help with long-term care costs.

Several other insurers will enter the 401(k) market within a year or so, predicts Jack VanDerhei, research director for the Employee Benefit Research Institute.

A recent EBRI study found that adding longevity annuities boosted retirees' success rates substantially compared with a portfolio of stocks and bonds alone, meaning they helped decrease the odds of running out of money, VanDerhei said.

He thinks many retirees could generally put 10 percent to 15 percent of their nest eggs into the products at retirement and end up with a payment stream in old age that helps them maintain their previous spending.

The kicker with these products for 401(k)s is their potential for group pricing and unisex rates. (Women's longer life expectancies mean they typically pay higher rates for these annuities in the individual market, but in employer plans unisex pricing must be used.)

Some insurers offer inflation riders on the income streams once they begin, but they don't offer the protection during the deferral. Over 25 years, their buying power could shrink by half or more, so it's up to consumers to aim for an appropriate monthly payout.

Today's low interest rates and lack of initial competition are two more problems.

"It's very difficult to come away thinking this is the right time to buy these," VanDerhei said. "But once the discount rate gets back to normal, this will be a good risk management technique."

Financial planner Michael Kitces asserts that even the worst financial markets in history would have outperformed the implied returns on today's longevity annuities.

That's no guarantee of future returns, and advocates for the products say consumers should think of them as insurance, not investments, but the debate is something to keep in mind as you decide whether, or how much, to buy.

A 60-year-old woman who puts \$50,000 into a QLAC on the individual market might get \$2,184 per month beginning at age 85, according to recent quotes from immediateannuities.com. A man could get \$2,804. Those rates are for an annuity with no death benefit, so if the insured dies before age 85, heirs get nothing. In exchange for lower monthly benefits, you can add return-of-premium provisions or period-certain benefits.

In the group 401(k) market, with unisex rates, MetLife estimates a 60-year-old might get \$2,457 per month beginning at 85.

That suggests women might lean toward a QLAC inside their 401(k)s, while a man might do better shopping rates from multiple carriers and rolling over the funds to an IRA. Fund firms Vanguard and Fidelity offer annuity-buying platforms for individuals, and some 401(k) plans guide their participants to Hueler Investment Services, which offers another buying platform.

Also, coordinate this decision with your plans for claiming Social Security benefits.

The program's delayed retirement credits — an 8 percent increase each year you delay claiming beyond full retirement age — might provide enough income that you don't need more longevity insurance.

Still think you'll want a QLAC option at work? Make the case with your benefits department. VanDerhei said employers are worried about their liability, despite government encouragement, so it could be a tough sell.

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Sunburn treatment:

Can't rush healing, but use these tips for comfort

FROM MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK
Mayo Clinic News Network

"Unfortunately, there's no fast-fix sunburn treatment. Once you have sunburn, the damage is done — although it may take 12 to 24 hours after sun exposure to know the full extent and severity of sunburn, and several days or more for your skin to begin to heal," says Trent Anderson, Mayo Clinic Health System family medicine physician.

In the meantime, the most effective sunburn treatment simply helps ease your discomfort:

- **Keep it cool.** Apply cold compresses, such as a towel dampened with cool water, to the affected skin. Or take a cool bath.

- **Keep it moist.** Apply aloe or moisturizing cream to the affected skin. Avoid products containing alcohol, which can further dry out skin. Beware of sunburn treatment products containing anesthetics, such as benzocaine. There's little evidence that these products are effective. In some cases, they may even irritate the skin. Benzocaine has been linked to a rare but serious, sometimes deadly, condition that decreases the amount of oxygen that the blood can carry. Don't use benzocaine in children younger than age 2 without supervision from a health-care professional, as this age group has been most affected. If you're an adult, never use more than the recommended dose of benzocaine, and consider talking about it with your doctor.

- **Leave blisters intact.** If blisters form, don't break them. Doing so only slows the healing process and increase the risk of infection. If needed, lightly cover blisters with gauze.

- **Take an over-the-counter pain reliever.** If needed, take anti-inflammatory medication — such as aspirin or ibuprofen — according to the label instructions until redness and soreness subside. Don't give children or teenagers aspirin. It may cause Reye's syndrome, a rare but potentially fatal disease.

- **Treat peeling skin gently.** Within a few days, the affected area may begin to peel. This is simply your body's way of getting rid of the top layer of damaged skin. While your skin is peeling, continue to use moisturizing cream.

"Consult a health-care

provider for sunburn treatment if severe sunburn covers a large portion of your body with blisters, (if) sunburn is accompanied by a high fever or (if) severe pain or severe sunburn doesn't begin to improve within a few days," says Dr. Anderson.

To prevent future episodes of sunburn, use sunscreen frequently and liberally. Select a broad-spectrum product — one that provides protection against both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation — with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. If you take medications that make sunburn more likely, be especially careful. A common example is tetracycline taken orally for acne. Common sense counts too. Cover up while you're outdoors, and stay in the shade as much as possible.

Beach safety rules that families should follow

BY BETH WHITEHOUSE
Newsday

Q: Can you review safety rules families should follow at the beach?

A: Staying safe at the beach can be more challenging than staying safe at a swimming pool because of the crowds and strength of the tides, according to the Arizona-based U.S. Swim School Association. The association has compiled guidelines, all of which are seconded by Bobby Hazen, founder of the Long Island, N.Y. Drowning Prevention Task Force.

■ Introduce your child to the lifeguard stationed in the area. Make a plan to meet there in case you are separated.

■ Teach your children to swim in front of the lifeguard station. If swimming with younger children, never be more than an arm's length

away, Hazen says.

■ Pay close attention to your older children, too, even though there are lifeguards. "The biggest mistake I see at the beach is parents will be sitting on the blanket when their kids are playing in the water," Hazen says.

■ Currents will push swimmers down the shore, so remind kids to frequently look to shore and return to the lifeguard spot.

■ Heed colored flags near the lifeguards that indicate if the water is dangerous, moderately rough or calm.

■ Don't dive into the ocean; go feet first to test the depth to prevent serious neck or head injury.

■ Teach your children how to swim out of rip currents: Swim parallel to the shore until out of the current, and then swim diagonally back to shore.

For more information, visit www.lidptf.org.

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— Author unknown



Jennifer Buttolph keeps her hands busy sewing a pillowcase. Photo by Jane Degeneffe

Purposeful Pillowcases



Families volunteer time to make pillowcases at the May Camp for Children's Cancer Connection held each May at the Boone Y-camp facility. Contributed photo

BY JANE M. DEGENEFFE
Contributing writer

Sewing machines buzz persistently every second and fourth Saturday within Jennifer and John Buttolph's home. Busy nurturing hands create beautiful, fun pillowcases for children suffering with cancer. Threads of compassion connect cheerful fabrics to the exact size of a very purposeful pillowcase.

A pillowcase is something to rest ones head upon. Rest? In the midst of chaos? Yes, rest. Jennifer coordinates sewing groups to bring rest and comfort in the midst of chaotic cancer symptoms. She became the Central/Western Iowa coordinator in September of 2012. She organizes sewers and quilt shops for those who earnestly desire to reach out to hurting families; victims of cancer. Jennifer coordinates others to join in the sewing, assembling, and distribution of pillowcases.

Originally, the group began

with a mother in Ohio who desired to soothe her son as he struggled upon his bed within his hospital room. In 2002, Cindy Kerr's 12 year old son Ryan, was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer. Her hope was that the pillowcase would cheer him up. It did! And this soon became a guessing game as to what the next pillowcase design and theme would be. She noticed that other children liked to see them as well, so Cindy decided to make them for the other patients too. When Ryan was released from the hospital for the first time, the family decided to start a non-profit organization that would benefit children with cancer. It was Ryan's friend, however, who came up with the idea to name the nonprofit "ConKerr Cancer," with the tag line "A Case for Smiles," using the family last name to resemble the word "conquer," as they battled away the days.

Jennifer relates the story this way, "The whole family pitched in

Mackenzie, age 14 works with several different groups to produce pillowcases. This year she held workshops with the Ellsworth, Iowa Go Getters 4H Club in Emmet County, the Faith Lutheran Church in Spencer, Iowa, First Baptist Church in Spencer, the Palo Alto 4H, and the Roelf PEO group. This is her fourth year of doing this project. Her goal is to donate 1,000 pillowcases by the time she has completed high school. She will be a freshman this fall. Mackenzie has made 209 pillowcases this year for a total of 500 since she's started making them. She gets help from friends. *Contributed photo*



to make and deliver those pillowcases. By 2005 people began emailing for information on how to start local ConKerr Cancer chapters. In 2007 Ryan passed away. We now have chapters in every state in the U.S. as well as other countries. At the end of July, 2015 the name will change to 'Ryan's Case For Smiles' with the tag line, 'Helping Kids Feel Better to Heal Better.'

"ConKerr Cancer's goal is to provide a bright, cheery pillowcase to every child with cancer or a life changing illness or injury across North America and beyond." — www.conkerrcancer.org/about/history.

Many helpless families receive these treasures of cloth as they face the adversity and affliction of cancer. This persistent buzz of hope has spread throughout the United States in little known sewing circles and quilt shops. How could something so small bring such light and joy? Persistence and pleasure.

And what does it feel like to make and release a project that you personally don't benefit from or see again?

"Unselfish," says Janet Lehman, who calls herself a "prolific piecer." She loves fabric and wants sometimes to have more and more of it, yet the time spent sewing with the group helps her to become others centered and more benevolent.

The people (mostly women) who become involved are willing to share their love of fabric and sewing with others. They realize their time is a great resource.

PILLOWCASE, page 22



Members of the ConKerr Cancer sewing circles with finished pillowcases. *Photo by Jane Degeneffe*



Jennifer Buttolph, left, poses with Virginia Ullrick. Virginia is a volunteer in the sewing circles of ConKerr Cancer. Photo by Jane Degeneffe

ConKerr Cancer's goal is to provide a bright, cheery pillowcase to every child with cancer or a life changing illness or injury across North America and beyond.

PILLOWCASE continued from page 21

Within the Ames, Iowa chapter some have described their motivation this way:

Sue Harms, "It's the love of the hobby. Something to do to make my hands busy and a way of giving back."

"It's a joy! I get to hang out with quilters!" Nancy Rabe says with a smile.

Virginia Ullrick, also a volunteer, met Jennifer one day at a separate occasion all together. As they were chatting Jennifer noticed that Virginia had a stray thread on her shirt.

She removed the thread graciously.

"Oh, thanks!" Virginia said, "I

was sewing this morning."

Jennifer quickly ceased the opportunity to inform her of Ryan's Case for Smiles and that was how she became involved with the sewing circles.

Through Jennifer's diligent planning, there is a continuous thread of compassion within our community of Ames that brings comfort to children suffering from cancer. The helplessness felt in battling such a serious illness is converted to productivity as she and her husband John open their home each second and fourth week of the month.

They've converted the entire front living room to sewing tables with lamps and ironing boards. Not only

do they open their home, but also joyfully serve lunch to those who faithfully arrive! There are plenty of opportunities for non-sewers to join the gathering, because Jennifer puts them to work with ironing, bagging for distribution, or assembling "kits" or pieces of fabric for each case.

September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Fundraisers coming up include "Miles of Pillowcase Smiles Campaign." The goal is to nationally get over 44,000 pillowcases donated. Young and old can make pillowcases and drop them off at quilt and fabric shops that participate in contributing to Ryan's Case for Smiles.



Left: A ConKerr Cancer sewing circle assembles pillowcases. Below: Sue Harms doing piecework. Photos by Jane Degeneffe

According to Jennifer, about 2,100 pillowcases equal one mile. On Sept 17, 2015, they will be having a national celebration to deliver a millionth pillowcase to a child in a hospital.

In Ames, Kohl's store also participates throughout the year in what is called their "Associate in Action" program. It is an excellent example of where Ryan's Case for Smiles can get grants for the production of pillowcases. If five associates give 3 hours of their time, Kohl's will give a \$500 grant.

Each May the Children's Cancer Connection of Des Moines, Iowa — www.children-scancerconnection.org/ — has what is called "family camp." Every year the sewing circle teaches the kids and their families how to make pillowcases. It's an all day event.

Throughout the year those interested can send tax deductible cash donations and/or fabric to Ryan's Case for Smiles, Jennifer Buttolph, 2823 Northwood Drive, Ames, IA 50010. For more information contact her at 515-460-2787 or jl50010@msn.com

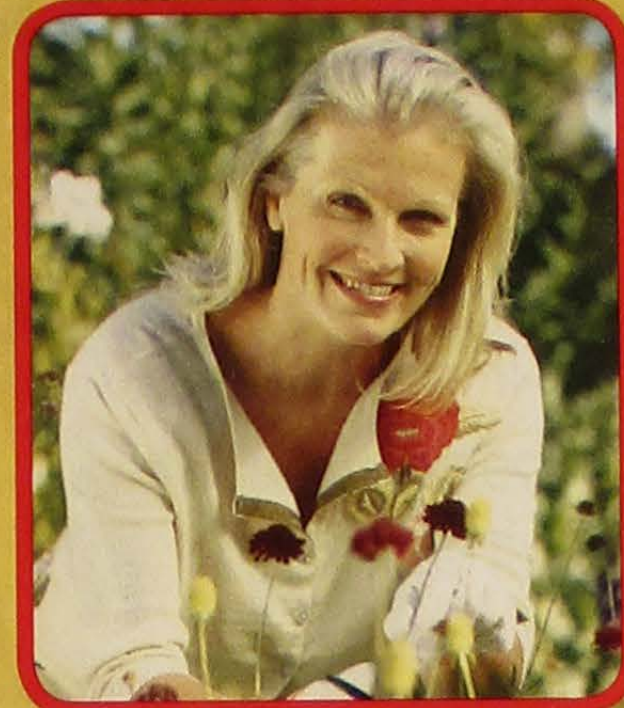
Also, throughout the year, these busy sewers deliver those purposeful pillowcases to a variety of honorable places: Blank



Children's Hospital, Children's Cancer Connection, Ronald McDonald House, Child Serve of 17 counties in Iowa, Mary Greeley Pediatrics, Hope Lodge and University Iowa Children's Hospital.

These delightful fabric addicts whom we wistfully admire (us non-sewers that is); those lovers of quilting and colorful textile design who often collect large amounts of fabric with not enough time or outsourcing to satisfy their need, find that Jennifer's sewing circles are just the ticket. They can ease the pain of worry by contributing their skill and passion with others like-minded. Sewing pillowcases for children with cancer continues to gain momentum as the pleasure of giving time and energy for others brings many a sincere smile.

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To bring out this little one's sisterly love, we'll need pest control



BY MEGHAN LEAHY
Special to the Washington Post

Q I am an only child, so I do not understand this sibling thing. My two kids (a boy, 7, and a girl, 5) are friends, but they argue and pester each other. Mostly, in my opinion, Little Sister pesters Older Brother. She will say something she knows is going to upset him or just disagree with him for the sake of disagreeing and starting an argument. There are times when I want to punish her (timeout, scolding) for being . . . annoying. However, my husband is the youngest of three boys, and he thinks her behavior is perfectly acceptable. I respect his perspective. What is the best way to handle a pesky younger sister? Tell the big brother to just ignore her (and allow her to continue to pester him) or tell her to stop pestering him?

A Sibling squabbles are common. Although most siblings have minor issues throughout childhood, it is not hard to find adults who harbor serious resentments and anger from sibling drama. Most of these resentments involve how their parents did or did not protect the children, how their parents created more competition among siblings or how the parents chose obvious favorites.

Luckily, you are ahead of the game because you are already thoughtful about what is happening here.

First, you understand the dynamic: little sister pestering older brother. Second, you understand that you are slightly (but only slightly) compromised in understanding sibling relationships and, third, you recognize that you want to punish what may or may not be normal behavior.

Your husband is on one side of the issue (that it's perfectly acceptable) and you are on the other ("I must stop this behavior").

Bring it to the middle.

First of all, your husband is right — sort of. Siblings annoy one another. There are many theories of why children appear to torture their brother or sister. One reason siblings fight, say people who study them, is because it is "safer" to bug, bother and generally torment your sister than, say, your friends at school. Your sibling will be there, day after day, and there is safety in that.

There is also just the normal friction that occurs among humans living together. Whether your children are similar or different in temperament, different or same gender, close or far apart in age, living together is difficult.

Additionally, with the pace that many families keep these days, I see many kids who are fighting for attention, and sometimes that means fighting a sibling. Chasing parents around the house, picking fights, teasing and creating mischief are among the many ways that children will unconsciously try to drag eyes to themselves.

Can sibling fighting turn ugly? Absolutely. When it is utterly one-sided, when the fighting is gleefully brutal, when one child is showing signs of anxiety or a child is becoming withdrawn,

you have a full-blown bullying problem.

Here, there is a 5-year-old who is really bugging her big brother, and there are two main ways we can tackle this: prevention and repair.

Prevention requires us to understand why the 5-year-old is bothering her brother so much. Does she need more positive attention, away from her brother and the tiffs? Are you waiting for her to control her own behavior when that is not developmentally appropriate? Is her brother also (stealthily) annoying her? Is it always occurring when she's hungry or tired? Start going through the list and see what clicks. Simply answering these questions will begin to lead you to answers.

Prevention also looks like parental intervention before the fighting becomes problematic. As soon as you hear your daughter beginning the fight, get in there. Be in charge. Take her by the hand and say, "Oh, Annie! I forgot, I am going to teach you to water the tomatoes now." She may not want to; that doesn't matter. You are going to move her along, away from her brother and away from the impending drama. The bad news? You may have to do this a lot. It is an exhausting time to parent, but don't let that dissuade you. Intervening is far less tiring than trying to break up the fight.

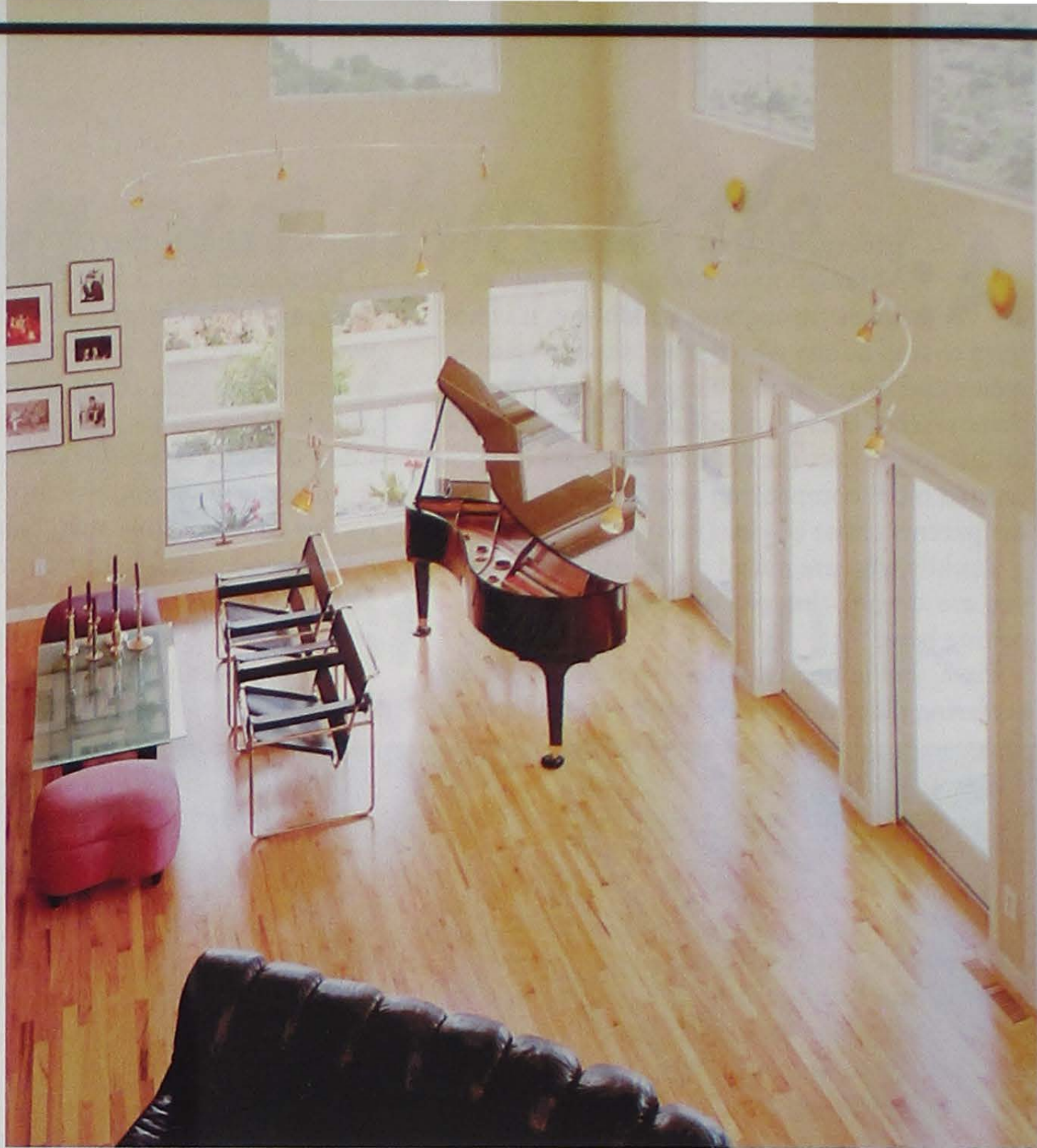
But for the times that you cannot prevent, and the fight is full tilt, we need some repairing.

Because your son is working hard to not attack or tease his sister back, he undoubtedly is annoyed and frustrated. Go ahead and say, "Geez, Annie is really getting on your nerves! It is frustrating when she keeps mimicking/poking/arguing/disagreeing with you, isn't it?" Create an outlet in which your son can express his feelings. Many parents worry that this will make a situation worse, but allowing children to have their feelings never makes anything worse. It lets your son know that you care, are listening and are interested in his reaction. It also lets him know that you, the parent, are not afraid of his big emotions. You can handle it.

So: sibling fighting. Normal? Yes. Can you do something about it? Yes. Good luck!

There are many theories of why children appear to torture their brother or sister. One reason siblings fight, say people who study them, is because it is "safer" to bug, bother and generally torment your sister than, say, your friends at school. Your sibling will be there, day after day, and there is safety in that.

Is track lighting the right choice for your home?



BY JAMES FIGY
Angie's List

When used correctly, track lighting highlights a room's best features. Track lighting helps homeowners spotlight pieces of art or pieces of furniture. With an electrical current flowing through the track, this popular product allows homeowners to change or reposition individual fixtures after installation. But track lighting, which first received a patent more than 50 years ago, is just one option for interior lighting.

Whether you're taking on a complete home remodel or just trying to brighten up a room, consider these pros and cons before choosing track lighting.

PRO: It's easy to install

Track lighting is no more difficult to install than regular lighting, says Brandon Hill, director of purchasing and specifications for Kopke Remodeling & Design in Sterling Heights, Mich. It simply requires more attention to placement, he adds.

Homeowners may prefer track lighting if they don't want to cut into the ceiling to run wire and add electrical boxes, says

Shelley McNaughton, owner of Shelley McNaughton Design Associates in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. "One of the reasons you want to use it is because you want lighting in a certain part of a room but you can't get into the ceiling," she says.

CON: The fixtures may cost more

Compared to other fixtures, which connect directly to an electrical box, track lighting isn't the cheapest option, McNaughton says. The type of fixtures and length of track also impact the cost, she adds.

Many tracks with directional fixtures cost between \$50 and \$100 for an almost 4-foot track. However, longer tracks with more fixtures could cost more than \$500. Any special fixtures will cost more. Also, the project will require a few hours of labor, and licensed electricians usually charge \$50 to \$100 per hour, according to CostHelper.com.

PRO: It highlights specific features well

"Track lighting would be (useful) when you want to light something specifically," McNaughton says. Directional fixtures can spotlight artwork on a gallery wall or a piece of furniture, while hanging pendants shine downward onto a kitchen island, table or

some other surface, she says.

CON: It provides poor general lighting

Hill says homeowners should consider the type of light source needed, the type of bulbs they want, what the room is used for and the ambiance they want. Homeowners should choose lighting based on these needs and use track lighting only when appropriate.

PRO: It comes in many different styles

With a plethora of different track and fixture styles, homeowners can easily find something to fit their décor. This rings especially true in contemporary settings, Hill says.

"Design-wise, track has a more modern or eclectic feel," he says.

CON: It sometimes looks clunky

In some settings, the track and additional hardware may make a ceiling too busy, McNaughton says. She often recommends recessed lighting with directional heads as an alternative. But in many cases, she adds, track lighting proves a good option.

"Depending on how they're used in the room, track lighting usually works," McNaughton says. "... It's just one of those things that you know when you're going to use and you know when you're not."



Good things happen when fruit meets fire

BY ELLIE KRIEGE | Special to the Washington Post

GRILLED FRUIT SUNDAES WITH STRAWBERRY SAUCE

4 servings

You'll need to soak a bamboo skewer in water for at least 30 minutes before grilling, or use a metal skewer.

MAKE AHEAD: The sauce can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

From dietitian and cookbook author Ellie Krieger.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon boiling water
- About 5 large strawberries, hulled and chopped (5 ounces total; defrosted, with juice, if using frozen)
- 10 seedless green grapes
- 1 medium peach or nectarine, ripe but firm
- 1 medium plum, ripe but firm

- 1 teaspoon canola oil
- 1 1/3 cups regular or low-fat vanilla frozen yogurt
- Fresh mint, for garnish

Steps

Prepare the grill for direct heat or preheat a gas grill to medium (375 to 400 degrees). If using a charcoal grill, light the charcoal; once the coals are ready, distribute them evenly in the cooking area. For a medium fire, you should be able to hold your hand about 6 inches above the coals for 6 to 7 seconds. Have ready a spray water bottle for taming any flames.

Combine the honey and boiling water in a liquid measuring cup, stirring until the honey has dissolved. Pour into a blender, then add the strawberries; puree until smooth. Strain

through a fine-mesh strainer into a container, pressing the puree through with a spoon. Discard the solids; cover and refrigerate until ready to use (up to 3 days).

Spray the grill grate, a vegetable grilling basket or a grill pan with cooking oil spray; if using the basket or pan, place it on the grill.

Thread the grapes onto the skewer. Cut the peach or nectarine and the plum in half, and discard the pits, then cut each half vertically into 2 round slices. Brush the fruit slices with oil on both sides and place them on the grate (or in the basket or pan). Cook uncovered for 2 minutes on one side, then turn and cook for 1 minute on the second side, until the fruit has softened and grill marks have formed. Transfer the

fruit to a cutting board, allow to cool slightly, then cut it into 1/2-inch pieces.

Place the skewer on the grill; cook uncovered for 1 to 2 minutes per side, until the grapes are lightly browned. Remove from the skewer and cut each grape in half.

To serve, spoon about 1/2 cup of fruit into each small bowl or parfait glass. Top each portion with a 1/3-cup scoop of the frozen yogurt, then drizzle with the chilled strawberry sauce. Garnish with mint; serve right away.

Nutrition | Per serving (using low-fat frozen yogurt): 160 calories, 2 g protein, 32 g carbohydrates, 3 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 10 mg cholesterol, 40 mg sodium, 2 g dietary fiber, 26 g sugar



Fall in love with the taste of Homegrown Goodness

Summer is the perfect time to buy delicious seasonal fruits and vegetables. Instead of traveling to a farmers' market or farm stand to pick up your local produce, why not stop by your neighborhood Hy-Vee store to complete all of your shopping in just one trip?

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According to the Food Marketing Institute's U.S. Grocery Shopping Trends report, the top reasons for purchasing locally grown foods include freshness (82%), supporting the local economy (75%) and taste (58%).

Buying locally grown fruits and vegetables helps the local economy of farmers and ranchers who live in our Hy-Vee community and brings customers the very freshest of produce. Plus, the taste just can't be beat! Local produce packs a nutritious punch, is superior in quality and tastes so fresh that you'll think it was grown in your own garden.

Local, seasonal fruits and vegetables are typically more budget-friendly because they are harvested during their peak season for you to enjoy. Popular

locally grown summer produce includes sweet corn, watermelon, tomatoes, peppers, muskmelon, zucchini and yellow squash, cabbage, cucumbers and green beans, as well as acorn, butternut and spaghetti squash.



AMY CLARK

Don't hesitate! Check out your neighborhood Hy-Vee's selection of locally grown fruits and vegetables and help support our mission to be earth-friendly and build a strong relationship with our community farmers and ranchers. Also, be sure to talk with your Hy-Vee dietitian about ways to increase your fruit and vegetable intake, incorporate fresh produce into your meals, or ways in which you can select the best produce from our stores.

HEIRLOOM TOMATO, YELLOW SQUASH & CANADIAN BACON PIZZA

Serves 4 (2 slices each)

All you need:

- 4 tablespoons Green Mountain Farms Greek yogurt cream cheese
- 1 Golden Home 100% whole grain ultra-thin pizza crust
- 1 yellow squash, thinly sliced

- 1 heirloom tomato, thinly sliced
- 10 slices Hormel pizza-style Canadian bacon

1/2 cup 2% shredded mozzarella cheese

All you do:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Spread a thin layer of Greek yogurt cream cheese on pizza crust.

Scatter the sliced squash and tomatoes evenly over the cream cheese layer. Layer Canadian bacon on top. Sprinkle the cheese evenly over the pizza.

Bake for 10 minutes or until cheese is melted.

Nutrition Facts per serving: 180 calories, 5 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 15 mg cholesterol, 270 mg sodium, 22 gm carbohydrate, 4 gm fiber, 3 gm sugar, 10 gm protein. Daily values: 8% vitamin A, 20% vitamin C, 20% calcium, 8% iron

Source: Amy Clark, Lincoln Center Ames Hy-Vee Dietitian

The information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice.

Amy Clark received her Bachelor of Science Degree in nutrition and dietetics from Iowa State University in 2003 and completed her dietetic internship at Iowa Methodist Medical Center in 2004. She is a member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and Iowa Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Amy completed CDR Certificate of Training in Adult Weight Management in November 2006. This information is not intended to be medical advice.

Let them ferment: A few days, a few ingredients and 2 recipes

BY CATHY BARROW
Special to the Washington Post

The vegetables are coming on strong, the markets are overflowing and farm stands glow with the colors of summer produce. It's time to pickle.

A fermented pickle is the Other Pickle: not vinegar-based. Although fermentation is trendy and has been picking up speed for all its health benefits, I ferment foods because it makes

them taste great. Fermentation uses micro-organisms and "good," lactic-acid bacteria naturally occurring in the air to turn vegetables into crunchy, tangy, welcome treats.

Making fermented pickles couldn't be more straightforward, requiring only pristine produce, water and salt. A relatively short amount of time can perform the transformative magic.

Half- and full-sour pickles, such as the ones served at classic New York delicatessens, are typically fermented. They make a great addition to any summer picnic and take only three days to go from cucumber to amazing. When you apply the same process to the components of a slaw, such as carrots and the much-maligned kohlrabi, your fellow picnickers will be treated to a whole new kind of zesty side dish.

Select vegetables for fermentation with care. Look for specimens with no bruising, soft spots or mold. Recently harvested cucumbers make for a crisper and more flavorful pickle. Kirby cucumbers are coming in now, benefiting from hot weather and consistent rains. They are plump, firm and sprightly, bright green and ready to be pickled. Kirbys have fewer seeds than so-called salad cukes and seedless (English) varieties and a more substantial skin, making them perfect for pickling. They remain crisp while absorbing the flavor of the brine.

Cucumber vines will continue to flower and fruit throughout the summer, but the early crop is heavy and gives a greater opportunity to find uniformly sized specimens. Why is that important? Because I like to pickle cucumbers whole and slice them just before serving, so I spend time hunting down right-size specimens to fit in the jars. (When I do

end up with mixed sizes, I'll plan to eat the smallest ones first, as they will brine the fastest, or I'll cut the whole batch into spears or thick chips before brining.)

Other things I've learned:

- Choose pristine produce. Vegetables with soft spots, bruises and other damage won't ferment at the same pace as specimens that are firm, fresh and perfectly ripe.

- Use filtered, non-chlorinated water. Chlorine can interfere with the fermentation and the flavor of the pickle.

- Pick the right salt. Use only kosher or sea salt; iodized (table) salt will turn ferments black and mushy.

- Weight for it. For a successful fermentation, the vegetables must remain completely submerged in the brine. I accomplish that in a few ways, including fitting another jar just inside the one filled with vegetables and brine; the fit should be snug enough not to allow air to escape yet just loose enough so that you can still remove the top jar. Fill that top jar with water, which will turn it into a weight that holds the vegetables down.

- Vary the flavor profiles. I always make a few straight-up sours with nothing but salt and water. In other jars, I might add dill seed (dried) or fresh dill flowers; garlic scapes or whole, peeled garlic cloves; even sliced jalapeno or habanero peppers. Be bold and adventurous.

- Avoid a mushy pickle. Every cucumber carries an enzyme that kills crunch. Cut off a slim piece of the blossom end. If you can't figure out which end that is, take a slice off both ends and call it a day. Some people add fresh (washed) grape leaves, oak leaves, horseradish leaves or leaves from a sour cherry tree, as the tannins therein will boost crunch.

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Deli-style fermented pickles



Fermented Spicy Gingered Carrot-Kohlrabi Slaw

DELI-STYLE FERMENTED SOUR PICKLES

12 servings (makes 3 quarts)

These old-fashioned sours are crisp, flavorful and full of pucker. Select only small, straight Kirby pickling cucumbers so they fit harmoniously in a jar and can be brined whole.

MAKE AHEAD: The cucumbers need to soak for 30 minutes in ice water. The pickles need at least 3 days' fermentation time, or more as needed (see below). The fermented pickles can be refrigerated for up to 1 month. From Cathy Barrow.

Ingredients

12 small or medium Kirby (pickling) cucumbers (see headnote)
8 cups filtered, non-chlorinated water
1/4 cup kosher or sea salt
12 garlic scapes or 9 large cloves fresh spring garlic (optional)

3 fresh dill seed heads or 3 teaspoons dried dill seed (optional)
1 jalapeno pepper, cut into 9 thin slices (optional)
1 1/2 teaspoons whole black peppercorns (optional)

Steps

Fill a large bowl with ice water. Add the cucumbers, swishing them around to dislodge any dirt and to plump them before brining. Soak for 30 minutes, then remove them and scrub away any remaining soil.

Combine the 8 cups of water and the salt in a medium pot over high heat; bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the salt. This will be the base brine; remove from the heat and cool completely.

If you are using any of the optional flavoring components (garlic scapes, garlic, fresh dill seed heads or dried dill seed, jalapeno and/or black peppercorns), divide them among the three jars.

Trim off and discard 1/8-inch from both ends of each cucumber. Pack 3 into the jar, standing up, then place another cucumber across the others, essentially pinning them down. This method holds the cucumbers under the brine.

Pour the brine over the cucumbers, covering them completely. Loosely cap the jars; set them inside a pan or on a dish to catch any spillover. Place the jars out of the sun on the counter for 3 days. Every day, loosen the caps and "burp" the jars, then replace the cap to continue the fermentation. The water will become cloudy, and lazy bubbles might be evident; this is a good thing.

After 3 days, slice off a piece of one pickle from each jar and taste it. Is it sour enough for you? If not, allow the pickles to continue to ferment, tasting regularly. (Cathy Barrow suggests a week will do the trick; in theory, the pickles can ferment for weeks longer.) Once the pickles taste good to you, tighten the caps; place them in the refrigerator (for up to 1 month).

FERMENTED SPICY GINGERED CARROT-KOHLRABI SLAW

6 servings (makes 3 cups)

This slaw is sweet and salty, spicy and bubbly — and just plain delicious. Use it as a condiment for grilled meat and fish, but try it layered on a sandwich or topping your taco or banh mi, too.

You'll need 1 wide-mouth quart jar, plus 1 standard 8-ounce jar, with clean screw-on caps for each. (The smaller jar will be used as a weight for keeping the fermenting vegetables submerged, which is crucial.)

MAKE AHEAD: The vegetables need 3 days' fermentation time, and up to 1 week for a more sour-tasting slaw. The fermented slaw can be refrigerated for up to 1 month.

From Cathy Barrow, the author

of "Mrs. Wheelbarrow's Practical Pantry: Recipes and Techniques for Year-Round Preserving" (W.W. Norton, 2014).

Ingredients

1 pound carrots, scrubbed well, then grated or cut into julienne (thin matchsticks)
8 ounces kohlrabi, peeled and grated or cut into julienne
1 teaspoon kosher or sea salt
1 teaspoon peeled, grated fresh ginger root
1 Thai (bird's-eye) chili pepper, pierced with the tip of a knife (optional)

Steps

Combine the carrots, kohlrabi and salt in a medium bowl (not plastic). Use your clean hands to work the salt through the vegetables. Let sit for 30 minutes; a brine will develop. Knead in the ginger.

Transfer the vegetables and brine to the larger jar. Press down firmly with your fist, or with a clean stainless-steel spoon, to encourage the brine to cover the vegetables by about 1 inch. Drop in the chili pepper, if using.

(If there is insufficient brine, boil 1 quart of water with 1 tablespoon of kosher salt, cool thoroughly and pour in the amount of brine needed to completely cover the vegetables.)

Fill the smaller jar with water, pie weights or dried beans; cap tightly. Place this weighted jar inside the larger jar to keep the vegetables submerged.

Check the vegetables every day to make sure they remain submerged. It's important to "burp" the jar once a day by simply removing the smaller weighted jar, then replacing it.

Taste the fermented slaw after 3 days. If it is sour enough for your taste, place it in the refrigerator; that will halt the fermentation process. If you would like a more sour slaw, continue to ferment, checking the flavor every day, for up to 1 week. After the slaw is fermented to your liking, seal tightly and refrigerate for up to 1 month.



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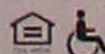


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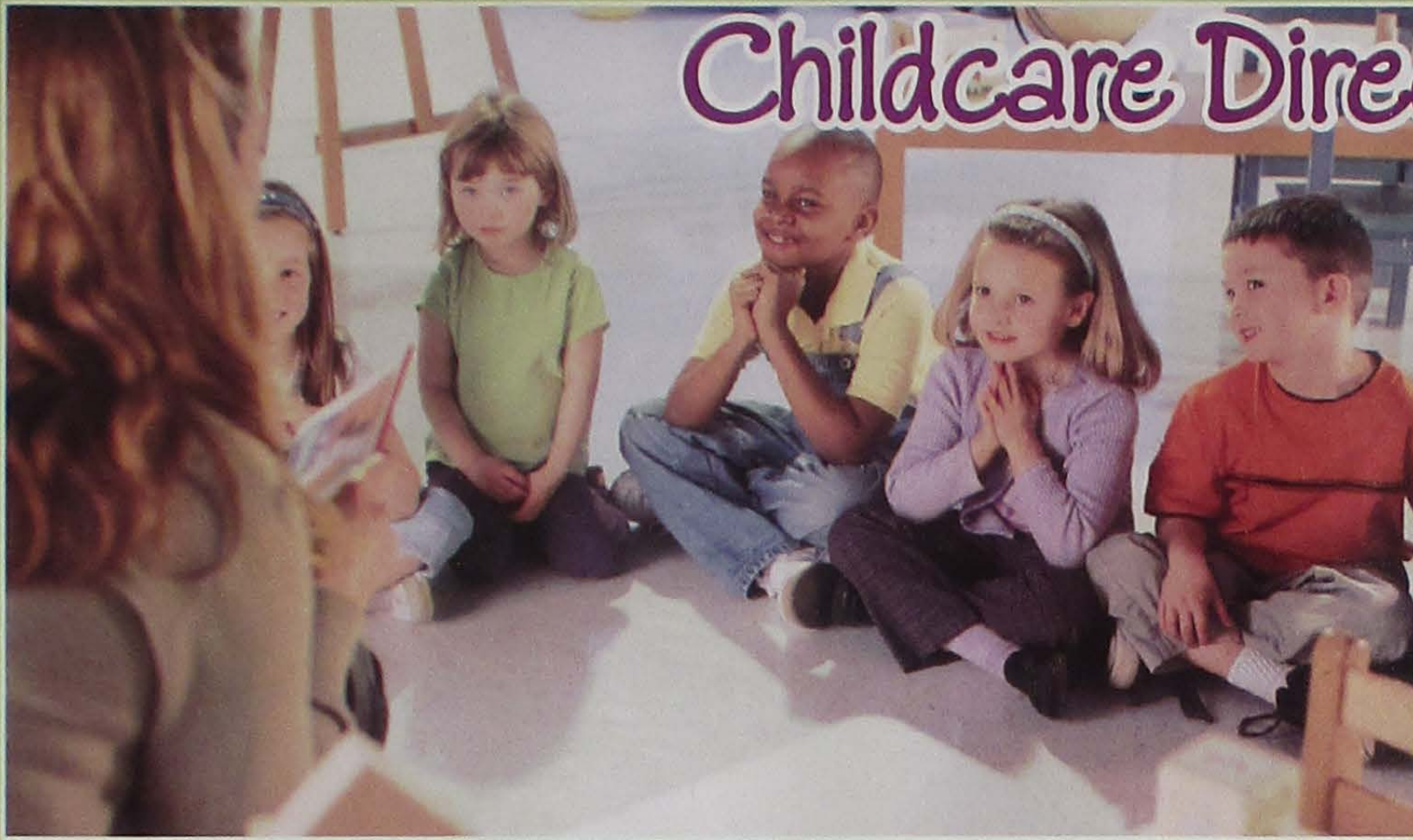
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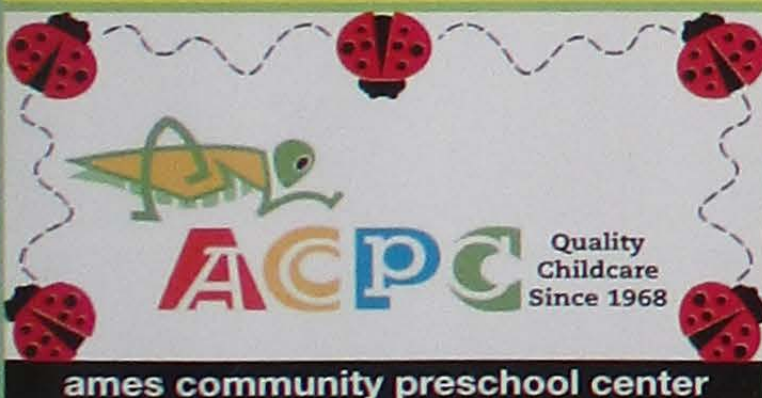
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